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Commission Hosts Presenter's Conference At The Renaissance Center

Evening Showcase Will Be Open To The Public

The Tennessee Arts Commission's Performing Arts Program will present *Tennessee Stages . . . Tennessee Stars* on **Tuesday, June 15** at The Renaissance Center in Dickson. The one-day presenter's conference will be devoted to providing technical assistance and multiple showcase opportunities in music, dance, and theater for Tennessee presenters and performing artists.

The schedule will include afternoon workshops and showcases, with an evening showcase open to the general public. The evening performances will begin at 7:30 p.m. Tickets will be available for purchase to the public, while conference participants will be admitted free. The Renaissance Center will tape the evening showcase for future broadcast.

"Tennessee is home to a diverse group of talented artists in all of the performing arts. All too often these performers do not receive the recognition they deserve, or the performance opportunities they need. We hope to begin the process of changing that with this conference," says Bob Kucher, deputy director of the Commission.

Kucher says he expects approximately 30 performing artists and groups to be selected for the showcases. "These artists represent a talented group of performers in all disciplines. They bring to the showcases a variety of styles, original ideas, and an abundance of creative energy. The audience will be in for a real treat, and will experience a full evening of great entertainment," adds Kucher.

In addition to the performers, conference attendees will include presenting organizations, performance venue management, representatives from arts councils, and festival organizers.

"We hope to give Tennessee presenters a sampling of the talent that is out there and available to them. It's also a chance for the performers to get much needed exposure," says Kucher.

Tennessee Stages . . . Tennessee Stars will include workshops on marketing, where presenters will learn how to successfully market their season, and how to maximize marketing efforts. There will also be discussions about block-booking in challenging economic times, and presenter partnerships where the focus will be on arts education, cultural tourism, and the Tennessee Presenters Network. Other topics will include working with managers, agents, and artists, grant funding opportunities, sessions on fundraising, and recruiting community volunteers.

Jerri Goldstein, author, publisher and consultant, will conduct a workshop on "How To Be Your Own Booking Agent" for artists in attendance. Goldstein is a former agent and manager. She will also offer individual consulting sessions in addition to her workshop.

"I'm looking forward to working with the creative artists of Tennessee. This will be my second visit to the state as a workshop leader. I hold a fond place in my heart for Tennessee," says Goldstein.

She says the presenter's conference will provide both performing artists and presenters much needed access to professional development resources and information.

For more information on *Tennessee Stages . . . Tennessee Stars*, call (615) 741-2093, or e-mail: bob.kucher@state.tn.us. Information is also available on the Commission's Web site: www.arts.state.tn.us/presentersconference.htm.



Come To Dickson!

Spend a day of sharing, learning, discussing, networking, booking, entertaining and being entertained.

Planning began over two years ago by the Commission staff for a statewide meeting to assist presenters and strengthen Tennessee performing arts organizations.

For a number of years the Performing Arts Program staff has encouraged Tennessee presenters to work together, share ideas, explore block-booking opportunities and to encourage other Tennessee organizations to become involved as presenters. Through the Commission’s Technical Assistance Program a presenters consortium, the Tennessee Presenter’s Network was formed, encouraging communication among its members. At the same time, the Commission has offered assistance to professional Tennessee touring artists through grant programs and focused statewide workshops.



Tennessee Stages . . . Tennessee Stars is a day-long event for established presenting groups and organizations interested in presenting, and touring artists interested in being presented, arts professionals, and arts supporters who just enjoy each other’s company.

Showcases begin in the early afternoon and continue throughout the evening, featuring a diverse group of Tennessee artists. Come spend the day with us in Dickson on Tuesday, June 15. You won’t be disappointed!


Rich Boyd
Executive Director

commission news

New Commission Member Appointed

Governor Phil Bredesen has appointed **James R. Threalkill** to serve on the Tennessee Arts Commission. Threalkill, an internationally known visual artist, is an art instructor at Montgomery Bell Academy in Nashville.

“We are delighted to have James on the Commission. His expertise as an artist will allow him to make a significant and important contribution. With his background, he will have an understanding of the needs of Tennessee artists,” said Molly Pratt, chair of the Commission.

Threalkill enjoyed success as a three-sport athlete in high school, and that led to his being offered an athletic scholarship to play football at Vanderbilt University. In 1979, he earned a bachelor’s degree in fine arts, and began teaching art in the public housing communities of Nashville. He developed a community arts program that led to his winning an Emmy Award in 1994 for work created with his students.



James R. Threalkill

In 1995, Threalkill was invited to travel to South Africa to coordinate a mural project with students from Soweto to pay tribute to Nelson Mandela, Bishop Tutu, Steve Biko and Miriam Makeba. Threalkill visited with President Mandela and presented the mural to the Regina Mundl Church where Mandela and Biko first held freedom meetings.

After returning from South Africa, Threalkill created a series of paintings from his journey. One of those works entitled “Guitar Solitude” led to the winning of the “Best of Show” award in the 1997 Central South Art Exhibition.

Threalkill has participated with many projects involving children and young artists. He collaborated in illustrating the children’s book series called “Visions: African American Experiences” that has been featured on *Sesame Street*. In 1999, he was invited to conduct an art workshop for children with disabilities at Camp Easter Seals. An original painting he created with the campers sold at an Easter seals fundraising auction for \$50,000.

Threalkill has held solo exhibitions at the Funda Centre in Soweto, South Africa, and Vanderbilt University. His group exhibitions include the “Visions of My People” exhibit at the Tennessee State Museum, the Tennessee All-State Artist Exhibit, and the Motion Picture Art Gallery in Hollywood, California. His commissions include portrait for the Dollar General Store Corporation, Fisk University, and Meharry Medical College.

A well-known motivational speaker, Threalkill is in constant demand for speaking engagements. He uses the story of his development into an internationally known artist as an example of how determination, perseverance, education, and faith in God can lead to success in life.

His work has been featured on the television programs *Living Single*, *The Jamie Foxx Show*, and *Sesame Street*.

Threalkill has a passion for the visual arts. He says, “my passion for art is fueled by the power of creativity through visual expression. Art offers so many opportunities to portray the excitement of life through vivid color and powerful images. As an artist, I am interpreting my experiences gained from people I’ve met, places I’ve traveled, and the world that surrounds me.”

Support The Arts With A Specialty Plate

Add a little pizzazz to your ride! Tennesseans are doing just that by purchasing unique and colorful specialty license plates. It’s a fun way to express individuality and support the cultural life of Tennessee. Purchasing a license plate provides funding and support for arts activities in communities across the state through the grant programs offered by the Tennessee Arts Commission.

The Commission started benefiting from revenue generated by the sale of the plates in 1983. The demand for these specialty plates has steadily increased, and now provides over two thirds of the Commission’s grants budget.

Plates can be ordered in person at local county clerk’s offices, or order online at: www.state.tn.us/safety/plates.html (Acrobat Reader required for order form).

Commission Welcomes Arts in Education Program Director

The Tennessee Arts Commission has announced the appointment of **Kim Leavitt** as director of the Arts in Education Program. Rich Boyd, executive director of the Commission, said Leavitt's background in theater and arts education will allow her to continue the success of the program. In making the announcement, Boyd said, "the program has continued to grow and enjoy new levels of success, and Kim has the background and experience to make an immediate impact. Her appointment will allow the Commission to keep building this program."

The goal of the Arts in Education Program is to integrate the arts into the basic school curriculum. The program is not focused on turning students into professional artists, but is intended to awaken natural creativity through exposure, experience, and appreciation of the arts.

Leavitt is a native of North Carolina and currently resides in Dickson. She received a bachelor of arts degree in theatre and speech from Tennessee Temple University in 1991. She received her master of arts in theatre and speech communication from Austin Peay State University in 1994, and a master of arts in English from Austin Peay in 1998.

Prior to joining the Commission, Leavitt served as managing director of theatre education and community outreach for The Renaissance Center in Dickson. While at the Renaissance Center, she not only coordinated the theatre education and creative writing programs, but she also served as the managing producer for the Renaissance Players, a community-based theater troupe. In addition, Leavitt was the creator and coordinator for the Youth Theatrical Outreach Program, a free dramatic arts

program for children in rural communities. She was also creator of the Young Actors Studio, a free mentoring program for high school students to gain internship experience in performance or technical design.

Before arriving at The Renaissance Center, Leavitt worked as an English instructor at Bishop McGuinness High School in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. She taught on the college level as an adjunct

professor of English at Hopkinsville Community College in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. She has also taught, as an adjunct professor, in the Theatre and Speech Communication Department at Austin Peay State University in Clarksville.

Leavitt is a member of Tennesseans for the Arts, the National Council of Teachers of English, the Modern Language Association, the Southeast Theatre Conference, and the American Association of Community Theatres. She has served as a guest lecturer for the Tennessee Arts Education Association.

"It's important that our Arts in Education Program continue to serve the students of our state. With Kim's leadership, I'm sure

we will keep moving this vital program forward in a successful direction," says Boyd.

Kim Leavitt can be reached at (615) 532-5934, or e-mail: kim.leavitt@state.tn.us.



*Kim Leavitt
Director
Arts in Education*

Commission Seeking Visual Artists For Upcoming Gallery Exhibits

The Visual Arts, Crafts and Media Program of the Tennessee Arts Commission is currently accepting applications from Tennessee artists desiring to participate in upcoming exhibits in the Commission's gallery. The gallery features the works of outstanding Tennessee visual artists on a regular basis throughout the year. **Completed applications must be postmarked by Monday, May 24, 2004.**

Applications are accepted from artists working in all forms of visual arts and crafts. A diverse panel of professionals from across the state evaluates applications based on quality of work, professional activity, and active involvement in the arts community. All professional artists who are current Tennessee residents, and who are residents at the time of their exhibition, are invited to apply.

Exhibits may feature the work of an individual artist or a complimentary small group exhibit. The exhibit schedule will run from October 2004 through January 2007. The gallery is located at 401 Charlotte Avenue in the Citizen's Plaza State Office Building in Nashville.

For application requests, eligibility requirements, and additional information, please contact Timothy Weber at (615) 532-9798 or e-mail: timothy.weber@state.tn.us. Application forms and detailed information is also available on the Commission's Web site: www.arts.state.tn.us.



Bob Kucher, deputy director of the Tennessee Arts Commission, talks with Nashville Artist Sylvia Hyman during a recent reception held at the Commission's Gallery.



Research has proven that students exposed to the arts as part of their core curriculum test higher in every other subject and develop superior problem-solving skills. The goal of the Tennessee Arts Commission’s Arts in Education Program is to integrate the arts into the basic educational curriculum. Emphasis is placed on exposure to, experience in, and appreciation of the arts, and on the awakening of natural creativity.

arts in education

Needs Assessment Focuses On *Commission To Conduct Statewide Survey*

By Kim Leavitt
Director of Arts in Education, Tennessee Arts Commission

The importance of arts education on our schools and communities is no longer subjective. Research from the Association for the Advancement of Arts Education demonstrates the impact of the arts on learning, comprehension, and personal growth. The Tennessee Arts Commission recognizes the significance of this research and strives to support artists and arts organizations who play an integral role in fostering programs that serve the needs of local schools, museums, libraries, and communities. In an effort to improve, refine, and sharpen the policy commitment to arts education, the Commission will conduct a six-month statewide Arts in Education needs assessment to determine how we can better assist those individuals and organizations that promote learning through the arts.

Dawn M. Ellis, consultant, artist, and independent scholar on Arts Education, has been contracted to facilitate a needs assessment for the Tennessee Arts Commission. Artists, teachers, school leaders, parents, arts and non-arts organizations across the state who provide arts education resources and programming will be invited to share their perspectives on issues in a project called *Probing the Field*. This project will help define outcomes and find new ways to nurture partnerships between local organizations and the Tennessee Arts Commission. Through regional meetings, focus groups, site visits, interviews, and a questionnaire, Ellis will help the Commission synthesize the diverse perspectives of the larger community.

*"Through this work,
I hope to help the
Tennessee Arts
Commission better
understand how it can
effectively assist the
citizens of Tennessee in
the area of education."
Dawn Ellis*

“Through this work, I hope to help the Tennessee Arts Commission better understand how it could most effectively help the citizens of Tennessee in the area of education,” says Ellis. “Tennessee has a wonderful opportunity. The Commission is choosing to look more methodologically at how best to spend limited public dollars by tapping the knowledge of its constituents and citizens. Instead of being pressed by external considerations, the Commission has both time and readiness to explore ways of improving its work in arts and education. The timing of the work should flow smoothly into the planning processes of the Commission as it looks to the future,” she says.

The survey will be available on the Tennessee Arts Commission’s Web site at <http://www.arts.state.tn.us>. The online questionnaire will provide Ellis and the Commission staff with information pertaining to the pressing needs surrounding learning in and through the arts and will help shape the goals of the Tennessee Arts Commission’s strategic planning process.

Ellis holds a master’s degree from Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education and a bachelor’s degree from Yale University. She worked for the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities from 1996-1998 and contributed to *Creative America: A Report to the President*, which provided President Clinton with an overview of the state of the arts and humanities in American society. She spearheaded the Arts Education Leadership Network Initiative for the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies and worked with VSA arts to develop educational resources for teachers and students. She has been a guest panelist for the U.S. Department of Education, the New England Board of Higher Education, and the Governor’s Literacy in the Arts Task Force. Ellis was a researcher for Harvard Project Zero where she explored creativity in non-arts fields, including business, economics, psychology and staff development. In addition to her work as a consultant, she is also a performer and teaching artist in the fields of music, dance, and theater.

Arts in Education



Photo: David Joel

Dawn Ellis (center) talks with participants at a recent VSA arts event.

Organizations and artists are encouraged to begin thinking about what is needed in order to help more Tennessee students and adults learn about or participate in the arts and how the Commission can continue to improve its services to help the arts and cultural sector make that happen.

“I am looking forward to learning from the wisdom of those who work on behalf of arts, culture, and an educated public in Tennessee. I hope to help further empower the field to engage in this work of improvement, using the skills of a researcher to help tap a broad array of communities,” says Ellis.

For more information on *Probing the Field*, please contact Kim Leavitt, director of Arts in Education and Literary Programs at (615)532-5934 or e-mail: kim.leavitt@state.tn.us.

Young Artists From Across State Honored At “My Home Is Tennessee” Reception

Tennessee’s next generation of artists were recognized March 10 when the Tennessee Arts Commission, along with Tennesseans for the Arts, hosted a special reception at the War Memorial Building in Nashville. The young artists were winners in the *My Home Is Tennessee* student art competition sponsored by the Commission’s Arts in Education Program. The statewide competition was open to all elementary school students in grades three through five attending public schools in Tennessee. Students were asked to create a work of art that depicted what is unique and important about their community, and could possibly inspire others to visit.

Winners of the competition, along with their families, spent the day visiting the sites in Nashville and attended the reception later that evening. Earlier in the day, the students met their Legislators at Legislative Plaza where the art was exhibited.

“The response to the competition went beyond our expectations. We received art from every region of the state. The project not only provided an educational experience to the students, but also provided us a refreshing and unique view of our communities,” said Rich Boyd, executive director of the Commission.

“The reception was a way for us to recognize these young artists. They look at the world with different perspectives, and we thank them for sharing their insightful views with us,” said Boyd.

The selection of the art was left to each school district’s discretion. The Commission encouraged educators in participating school districts to work together in determining which pieces to submit. A panel juried the school districts’ submissions and selected four pieces from each senate district for inclusion.

(Left Photo) Student Artist Leica Wilde from Chattanooga entertains her sister with balloon sculptures at the reception.



(Right Photo) Lisa Hester, director of arts access for the Tennessee Arts Commission, welcomes a participant.



visual arts

Located high on a bluff in Memphis, overlooking the scenic Mississippi River, is the National Ornamental Metal Museum. Once a struggling one-man operation, the museum has come a long way from its humble beginnings, and is currently celebrating its 25th anniversary. Like most museums, the staff is constantly working toward attracting visitors and supporters, but this museum is a little different than most. It's the only institution in the United States devoted exclusively to the preservation and promotion of metalwork. And visitors can actually see the art being created.



National Ornamental Metal Museum

Unique Museum Still Considered A Work In Progress

Jim Wallace, director of the National Ornamental Metal Museum, has been there from the start. He has witnessed the progress firsthand, and is credited for turning the National Ornamental Metal Museum into a center for scholarship and a hub for metalworking in the United States. Many feel that he has even played a major role in the renaissance of this art form.

“Once I was the only employee. We had no electricity and no heat. There was more paint on the floor than on the walls. We have certainly made a lot of progress over the last 25 years. We now have a full-time staff of nine, and two part-time employees. Attendance has also grown steadily as more people have learned about what we have to offer,” says Wallace.

According to Wallace, the museum attracts around 30,000 visitors each year. Those visitors represent a diverse cross section from all walks of life. He says, “the museum attracts everyone from school children to people looking for special items, and we attract the serious scholars as well.”

The American Craft Council calls the museum a “Mecca for metalsmiths.” One visitor from Glasgow, Scotland, said, “it’s one of the most interesting museums I have ever seen anywhere in the world.”

Wallace credits much of the success to the many loyal volunteers. The museum has also received help from the Greater Memphis Arts Council, and the Tennessee Arts Commission, along with corporate and individual support.

“We were looking at doing something special for the 25th anniversary. We could have done one exhibition, but we are always doing things a little different. We decided to host three exhibitions throughout the year and call the year ‘A Work In Progress.’ Since we don’t ever consider something completely finished, we always have another project waiting in the wings.”

*Jim Wallace
Museum Director*



According to Wallace the vision really didn’t begin to take shape until after five years of operation. “When we were really hungry and really poor, the first thing on our mind was survival. After we struggled for those first few years, we began to develop a serious vision of where we wanted to go. Now, after 25 years we are close, but we are always reaching for our vision – always wanting to achieve more.”

To commemorate 25 years, the museum will present a series of three exhibits during the year. The entire year is being called “A Work In Progress.” The first exhibit is comprised of work by employees, or former employees, of the museum. This exhibit will be followed by an exhibition of the permanent collection titled “A Work In Progress: The Permanent Collection,” and the final exhibit in the series will be titled “I Used to Hang Out Here,” and will feature works by those who participated in workshops, friends and volunteers, and others who were affiliated but not employed by the museum. Catalogs will be produced for all three exhibitions, and will be available separately or in a commemorative box set.

“We were looking at doing something special for the 25th anniversary. We could have done one exhibition, but we are always doing things a little different. We decided to host three exhibitions throughout the year and call the year ‘A Work in Progress.’ Since we don’t ever consider something completely finished, we always have another project waiting in the wings. It seemed like the ideal way to commemorate the anniversary,” says Wallace.

Celebrates 25 Years

A Shinning Jewel On The Banks Of The Mississippi

The view from the National Ornamental Metal Museum is considered one of the most beautiful in Memphis. The property, which originally included three buildings, was once part of a public health service hospital. When the hospital closed in the mid 1960s, it was deeded to the city of Memphis through the Heritage and Conservation Act. As a nonprofit organization with an educational focus, the museum met the usage requirements. A five-year lease was obtained in July 1976. Two years later, renovation of the two buildings began. The museum opened to the public in February of 1979.

Since that time over three-quarters of a million dollars have gone into developing the property, constructing the Schering-Plough Smithy, Conservation Lab, The Riverbluff Pavilion, improving the galleries, support space, and the grounds. This figure does not include the countless volunteer hours and contributed goods and services. In 1992, the city awarded the museum a twenty-five year renewable lease.

“There is no question about it. We have built an institution that is second to none in the field of metals. We are the best that can be found anywhere. We have taken an abandoned piece of property and turned it into one of the most desirable places in Memphis, and that’s not too bad,” says Wallace.

Richard Wattenmaker, director of the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution, has called the museum, “a very important place – a unique museum in the United states.” Wattenmaker is also a collector and scholar of wrought iron.



“There’s no place like it. It has the mix of a village blacksmith shop, but it also has a scholarly, formal aspect - though not dauntingly formal. It’s such a lovely place with such nice people.”

Richard Quinnell



The gates outside the museum always attract the attention of visitors. These gates are works of art in and of themselves. Designed by Englishman Richard Quinnell, the gates feature a classic scroll pattern, and are studded with scores of rosettes crafted by more than 180 metalsmiths from 18 countries.

Quinnell, recently retired principal of Quinnell, Ltd., where he specialized in architectural metalwork worldwide, is obviously impressed with the museum. “There’s no place like it. It has the mix of a village blacksmith shop, but also has a scholarly, formal aspect – though not dauntingly formal. It’s such a lovely place with such nice people. I always enjoy my visits,” says Quinnell.

“The museum is a center of scholarship like any museum, but I find it extraordinary that it is also a working facility,” he adds.

Looking Toward the Future

Jim Wallace says, “We never really reach the goal of achieving our vision. We may be getting close, but we are continuously reaching, and we always want to achieve more.”

Wallace says the museum has ambitious plans for the future. Included in those plans is a new library. The library will be housed in a re-built 1870 structure. The museum is completely rebuilding the structure, and the project is expected to cost over 1 million dollars to complete.

“Our library holdings are so large that we can’t have everything available to the public right now. We have so much of our collections in storage. We have approximately 25,000 images of metalworks. We have an additional 10,000 volumes of images in books, folios, and catalogs. It’s one of the top two collections on metalwork in North America,” says Wallace.

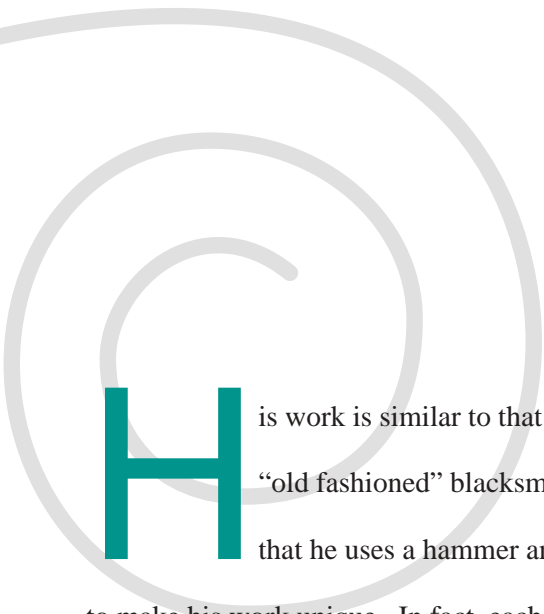
Construction on the new library facility is expected to begin in January of 2005.

Another addition that Wallace is pleased about is a new building that will house the Lawler Foundry. That facility should be open and functioning in April of 2004.

This year, the museum will also expand its educational programs. Supported by the Greater Memphis Arts Council’s Art Education in the Schools Initiative, staff blacksmiths will be offering hands-on experiences at a number of schools in the Memphis area.

“We are looking forward. We certainly don’t want to forget our past, but we are going to continue to improve,” adds Wallace.

Wallace envisions a campus that is literally the home for metals in the United States and the world. He says the museum can become “a place where metal workers and artists can come and feel like they have a vested interest – a place where they can share ideas, create, and feel they are a part of this unique and interesting art form.” ■



His work is similar to that of an “old fashioned” blacksmith in that he uses a hammer and anvil to make his work unique. In fact, each piece that Charlie Harmon creates is an original work of art. It’s obvious that Charlie Harmon loves ironwork. He enjoys nothing more than taking a solid piece of metal and turning it into something beautiful.

With his reputation growing, his creations can be found in homes, churches, and businesses throughout the region.

artist profile

Working With Metal Comes Naturally

Communication Has Been The Biggest Challenge For Metal Artist Who Is Deaf

Charlie Harmon loves taking a piece of metal and transforming it into a work of art. In fact, he has been doing just that most of his life. Harmon, deaf since he was three-years-old, has spent a large part of his 51 years developing and honing his craft. He says that along the way, communication has been the biggest challenge for him. However, with the help of an interpreter, Harmon has been able to communicate with his clients, and has created and sold his custom designed ironwork throughout the Southeast.

Harmon says it’s really the customers who are a bit hesitant to communicate with him at first. “Most of the time, people will contact me through my interpreter, or they will hear about my work from someone else. My interpreter goes with me to the first meeting with the client, not so much for me but for the customer. People are afraid they will not know how to communicate with me. However, once they get to know me, they realize we can communicate back and forth through writing,” says Harmon. Over the years his reputation has grown, and so has his business. He currently owns Olde Town Metal Sculptures, located in Bluff City, Tennessee, between Johnson City and Bristol. His work can be found in homes, churches, and businesses throughout the region.

“Every piece created is unique and original. I do everything by hand, and I do not use machines. If I sell someone a table, they are not just getting a table. They are getting a ‘one of a kind’ piece of art for their home.”

Charlie Harmon



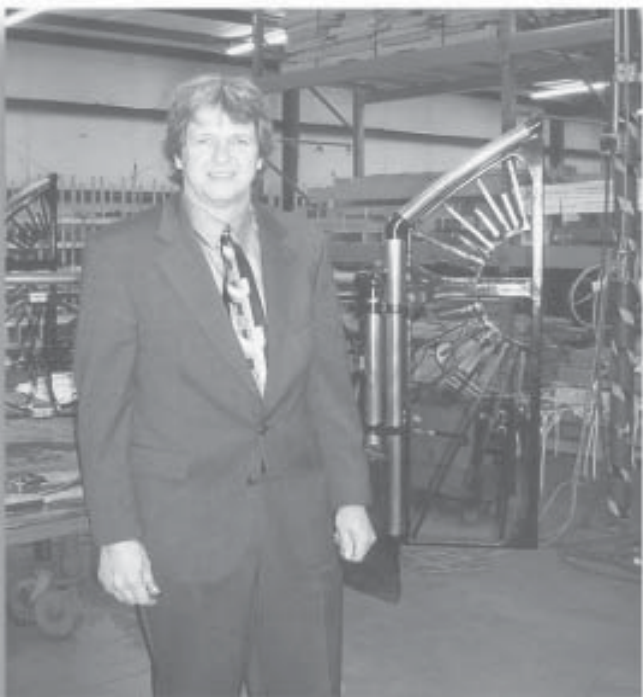
Harmon has created a series of angel candleholders. Each angel is designed to fit individual personalities.



Charlie Harmon creates many styles of candleholders.

“Every piece I create is unique and original. I do everything by hand, and I do not use machines. If I sell someone a table, they are not just getting a table. They are getting a ‘one of a kind’ piece of art for their home,” says Harmon. He takes personal satisfaction in pleasing his customers. “I go to their home, I look around, and determine what they need. I draw three or four pictures. I take those pictures back to the client and we discuss what they like. We decide on a finished drawing, then I begin work.” Harmon learned to weld in the 1970s when he was working at a Johnson City factory. He later became certified in both welding and blueprint reading when he worked with an uncle in South Carolina. It was there that his artistic talents began to develop, and he demonstrated his newly-discovered artistic ability when he created a large horse with a diamond eye from scrap metal. He sold the piece for \$3,500, and his career as an artist began to take shape.

To Artist Charlie Harmon



Metal Artist Charlie Harmon in his Johnson City studio and workshop.

“I sold the horse piece to someone, and I realized at that point that I could earn a living creating metal sculptures. It was then I discovered a talent for working with these types of materials,” says Harmon.

Harmon also worked for awhile in North Carolina with a blacksmith and metal sculptor named Bill Brown. Working with Brown, he learned the smithing trade. He learned how to use an anvil and hammer, which would later help him in creating his unique works of art.

“I started working with metals as a hobby, but when I moved to North Carolina in 1995, I met Bill. I worked with him for a year and a half. I learned a lot about my craft while working there,” says Harmon.

He opened his first metal sculpting shop in 1998. It was located in a garage in Jonesborough, and he managed just enough business to get by. His shop was located away from the main business district and he was not well-known. He later moved the business to Johnson City, but the struggle continued. Finally, through word of mouth and his growing reputation for quality workmanship, customers began to seek him out.

With his career on track, Harmon relocated his shop to Bluff City this year.

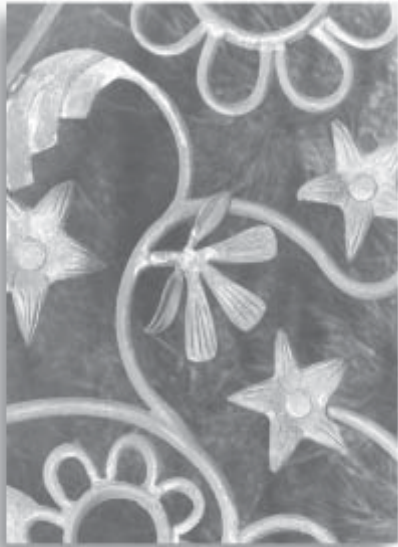
“It was just a natural thing for me to grow up being interested in art. I tried pencil drawings for awhile, but when I started welding on my job, I became interested in welding as an art form. As for influences, I think it’s just an inborn talent,” says Harmon.

Along the way, Harmon always knew he could succeed. He never gave up on his dream.

“I knew I could do anything anyone else could do. My only hold-up was the communication barrier,” he says.

“I see and hear with my eyes. I definitely think I see things, in a creative mode, that others do not see. I just enjoy the art. When I found out about metal sculpture, I realized that was what I was meant to do. I believe God gave me this gift,” he adds.

For more information on Charlie Harmon and his work, contact Carol Mohler at (423) 677-9300, or e-mail: metalartist@hiptop.suncom.net.



Detail of a bench Harmon created.

arts across the state

Arts Groups Come Together

Knowledge is power in tough economic times. Knowledge shared is even more powerful. Arts groups from across the state met recently at Montgomery Bell State Park in Dickson. The Tennessee Arts Commission invited arts councils to gather and share ideas, network, and look at ways of working together. The meeting was held March 11 and 12, and featured sessions on fundraising, marketing, economic development and the arts, and panel discussions on best practices.

The meeting was presented through the Commission’s Community Arts Development Program as a way of strengthening and empowering the state’s community arts councils. The goal was to share ideas and information among participating councils, and to focus on innovative approaches to problems. Another goal was to develop specific ideas for the organizations to take back and implement.

“This is something we have wanted to do for some time. There are so many great ideas and creative methods being used by many of our arts groups throughout the state. We just wanted to provide a way of sharing those ideas,” said Jonathan Saad, director of the Community Arts Development Program.



Participants register at Montgomery Bell State Park. Reviewing materials at the registration table are (left to right) Tammy Dohner, board member of Mid-Cumberland Arts League in Clarksville; and Terri Jordan, president of the Mid-Cumberland Arts League.



Jonathan Saad, director of the Community Arts Development Program of the Tennessee Arts Commission, talks with Patrice Walker Powell, director of Challenge America/ Local Arts Agencies Grants for the National Endowment for the Arts.

Saad said, “the meeting was a way for the arts groups to get to know each other, and to learn about all the exciting things happening in Tennessee.”

According to Saad, an informal network of Tennessee arts council experts, in a wide variety of areas, could grow out of the meeting– a network that could help arts councils both large and small.

Sandy Wright, an internationally recognized consultant to business and nonprofit organizations, served as a facilitator for the meeting. Wright is a co-founder of the Yuuma Group, a consortium of consultants and facilitators, researchers, and planners. The group works in the areas of marketing/public relations, leadership development, project management, program development, cultural planning and cultural tourism, fundraising, and economic development.

Wright found the meeting to be intriguing, inspiring, and informative. She complimented the participants on their willingness to exchange ideas and take part in the process.

“It is rare to experience a group that is not only willing to provide insight and expertise to one another, but who actively engage in the process,” said Wright.

“It made no difference whether the council was in a major city or a rural area, whether their budgets were \$1 million or simply start-up funds, everyone brought important information, questions and ideas to the process. The end result was an invigorating day of interaction and networking. We felt privileged to be a part of it all,” she said.



Panel discussions centered on Best Practices for Programs. Participating in the discussion are (left to right): Kathi Landon Leatherwood, Jackson Arts Council; Ellen Kimball, Athens Area Council for the Arts; Liza Zenni, Arts and Cultural Alliance of Greater Knoxville; and Susan Schadt, Greater Memphis Arts Council.

For more information on the Tennessee Arts Commission's Community Arts Development Program, contact Jonathan Saad at (615) 532-9796, or e-mail: jonathan.saad@state.tn.us.

Saad and Wright both agree that most arts councils face many of the same problems and have similar issues. Of course, funding is often a number one issue. Other common issues include communications and promotions, board participation, and finding and fostering strong leadership among staff, board and volunteers.

"If we can actively connect with one another, continue to share ideas and feel free to risk trying new approaches, our arts organizations will not only survive, but thrive. We encourage all participants, and those who couldn't attend, to pick up the phone or send an e-mail to a colleague. Let them help you brainstorm or solve the issues that confront your organization," said Wright.

"If we can actively connect with one another, continue to share ideas, and feel free to risk trying new approaches, our arts organizations will not only survive, but thrive."

Sandy Wright

Kathi Landon Leatherwood, director of the Jackson Arts Council, attended the meeting and agreed with the other attendees that it was an excellent opportunity to meet others and share ideas.

"The arts are moving forward in Tennessee, and meetings such as this are proof of the gathering interest and enthusiasm," said Leatherwood.

"There was a tremendous amount of knowledge shared and absorbed. In many cases, there was a sigh of relief when people realized that they did not have to 'recreate the wheel' for their agency – they just needed to find out how their neighbor across the state had approached a similar situation."

WONDERS' Exhibit Features Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael, and Botticelli

Memphis Chosen As Only North American Stop

WONDERS: The Memphis International Cultural Series will present **MASTERS OF FLORENCE: Glory & Genius at the Court of the Medici** at The Pyramid in downtown Memphis from **April 23 through October 3, 2004**.

The most important exhibition in WONDERS' history, this exhibition tells the story of the remarkable concentration of genius that existed in central Italy, especially Florence, from 1300-1740. The artists, authors, statesmen and church leaders of this time brought Europe out of the Middle Ages and invented the modern world. One family—the Medici of Florence—was at the center of these changes.

Drawn from more than 30 museums and private collections in Italy, France, the Vatican and the United States, **MASTERS OF FLORENCE** will include more than 240 objects of art, science, literature, and personal objects.

MASTERS OF FLORENCE tells the story of Florence and its almost magical position in space and time—a time where all of the elements seemed to come together so that for a short period, it was the center of art, culture and wealth in Europe. Florence's geographic position made it a prize for which many European powers fought—especially France, Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. The story of Florence is tied with that of a family that emerged from the chaos at the end of the Middle Ages to become one of the wealthiest, most influential families in European history—the Medici. Rising from a merchant class family to becoming the bankers to the royal families of Europe and to the Vatican, the Medici's traditional patronage of the arts and quest for glory led them to become the sponsors of the greatest minds of the renaissance

through the Baroque Age. They eventually became popes, queens of France, and royalty in their own right.

MASTERS OF FLORENCE is the most important exhibition WONDERS has ever presented. The story covers one of the most significant eras in history—from the end of medieval times, through the renaissance, to the dawn of the modern world. Each of the most influential renaissance artists is represented. This premier presentation is being shown exclusively in Memphis Tennessee.

For more information on the exhibit call 1-800-263-6744, or visit the WONDERS Web site: www.wonders.org.



"Dama Scapigliata," by Leonardo da Vinci 1500-1516, 8 x 10 inches, chalk drawing. Courtesy of WONDERS and Parma National Gallery.



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